Church of The Holy Cross

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CHURCH OF THE HOLY CROSS

by

EDMUND LEAMY

THREE TWENTY-NINE WEST FORTY-SECOND STREET
NEW YORK, N. Y.

REV. JOSEPH A. McCAFFREY

FOREWORD

FROM my office window in the McGraw-Hill Building on West 42nd Street, New York, N. Y., I could look down on the Church of the Holy Cross.

I knew it, of course, as the Church of the famous "Fighting Irish" 69th Regiment. But I had never been in it.

One Monday, three or four years ago, I was attracted by the crowds which swarmed through its doors all day. I wondered why, and I asked. The answer was: Father Joseph A. McCaffrey's Perpetual Novena to Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal.

I went in.

Father McCaffrey was in the pulpit. I liked him; his straightforward way of speaking; his sincerity and inherent honesty. I liked the devotion of the congregation. I liked the church itself. I resolved to find out more about it, and those who had made it what it is.

But things happened. Only the other day did I find out all that I have set down here. The writing may be poor, but the Saga of the Church of the Holy Cross needs not the touch of a literary pen.

—E. L.

New York, N. Y.
April, 1939.

THE SANCTUARY

The Church of the Holy Cross

by

EDMUND LEAMY

MILLARD FILLMORE, a Whig, was thirteenth President of the United States; Washington Hunt was Governor of New York; A. C. Kingsland was Mayor, and a far-seeing prelate named John Hughes was Archbishop, when ground was broken for a church which was later to become one of the most noted shrines in New York City—the Church of the Holy Cross, on West 42nd Street.

At that time, this section of the city was "away up town." The first railroad service across the Mississippi was about to be inaugurated; *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had just been published in book form, and the Civil War was not to burst into being until nine years later. But Archbishop Hughes, foreseeing the city's expansion, decided on West 42nd Street as the site of a new church.

Early in 1852, the Rev. Joseph Lutz was commissioned by the Archbishop to found the new parish on the west side of the city, north of St. Columba's, and south of Manhattanville (125th Street), which was then a neighborhood of farms and fine residences.

Without endowment, without funds, with few to call upon, Father Lutz set about his task of establishing the new church. It was up-hill work, but his appeals were answered, notably by an anonymous gentleman through whom two lots were purchased, and a small, temporary chapel was built.

The congregation grew. Soon it was evident that a

larger building was needed. With customary thoroughness Father Lutz went to work. More ground was purchased. On November 25, 1852, Bishop Whalen, of Wheeling, W. Va., laid the cornerstone for a new church, which was solemnly dedicated to the service of God, on December 17, 1854, where the present church now stands.

A year later Father Lutz was transferred to the Church of the Immaculate Conception and was succeeded by the Rev. Thomas Martin, O.P., with the Rev. Patrick McCarthy as assistant. In 1857 Father McCarthy became pastor.

For ten years, under the new pastor's guidance, the parish prospered spiritually and materially. Then Fate struck the cruelest of blows. In 1867, during a thunderstorm, the church was badly damaged by lightning. Examination of the building by competent architects and builders disclosed the fact that it had been poorly constructed in the first place, and that it could not be repaired. The whole edifice had to be demolished and a new one erected in its place.

What with the financial condition of the parish—there was a debt of $25,000 still owing on the building to be torn down—and the establishment of a new parish, that of St. Michael's, between St. Columba's and Holy Cross, Father McCarthy was faced with a stupendous task. But he went about it manfully. With hope and trust in his heart he watched the cornerstone being relaid in 1868. With joy, and pardonable pride, tinged by worry over a debt of $25,000 increased to $116,000, he saw the new Church of the Holy Cross opened to the public on May 6, 1870.

That was a grand, glad occasion. The building which, somewhat enlarged, is the one you and I can see today, was

a cruciform, transition-style Byzantine structure with rare dignity and charm, not always to be found in churches conforming to the strictly Gothic or the strictly Roman. It has the indefinable quality of being devotional. The sort of place where the "wearied and the burdened" find surcease and solace, and the humble touch hands with God.

In 1870 its depth was 100 feet; its width 82 feet, except at the transepts, where ten feet additional made the arms of the cross. Above it rises a dome which is topped off by a cross, 148 feet from the ground.

Holy Cross continued to grow. It grew through the faith of the Faithful, and the understanding of its pastor. But the strain was too great for Father McCarthy. Frail constitutionally, worried and harassed by debts, obligations, and the establishment of yet another new parish, that of the Sacred Heart, which took some of his anticipated revenue, Father McCarthy passed on to his Eternal Reward on August 7, 1877.

His successor was the Rev. Charles McCready, who assumed the pastorate, September 24th, that same year. The day Cardinal John McCloskey appointed him head of Holy Cross, the church was over $92,000 in debt; the rectory had been sold for taxes and assessments; creditors were clamoring for their pay.

Like those who had preceded him, and those who were to follow, Father McCready was undaunted by the seemingly insurmountable obstacles with which he was faced. Courageously he began reorganizing the parish. Slowly but surely he made progress. Seven years after he had been appointed Rector of Holy Cross, on January 1, 1885, he was able to inform his parishioners that the debt had been paid off in full.

More Than 20,000 People
Attend the Novena Services
Every Monday

In the meantime, however, the parish had increased in numbers. Once again the church was inadequate to accommodate the worshipers. It was imperative that it be enlarged, and extended to conform with the original design of the founder. This was done, and the church on West 42nd Street, which stands today, is the one the Most Reverend Archbishop Michael A. Corrigan, D.D., consecrated on Sunday, March 26, 1886.

Within three years after this a parochial school for boys and girls was opened on West 43rd Street, and cognizant of the fact that the Holy Cross Lyceum, a clubhouse for young men of the neighborhood, had also been established, Archbishop Corrigan raised Father McCready to the rank of Permanent Rector. Following the Golden Jubilee of Holy Cross in 1902, Father McCready was dignified with the title of Monsignor.

April 9, 1915, when Europe was in the throes of a devastating war, and the *"Lusitania* incident" had not yet occurred, Monsignor McCready died. He was succeeded by the Rev. Joseph F. Flannelly, who made many improvements in the church, school, and rectory, and earned for himself a reputation for priestly zeal. His sudden death on October 14, 1920, was a shock to the Parish, especially to the children and the poor, whom he loved above all else, except God.

On January 1, 1921, appointed by Archbishop Patrick J. Hayes, the Rev. Francis P. Duffy came to Holy Cross as its new rector. He came, a national figure, beloved Chaplain of the "Fighting Irish," 69th Regiment of New York, and with a reputation for bravery on many a battle-scarred front overseas.

It was fitting that he should be rector of Holy Cross,

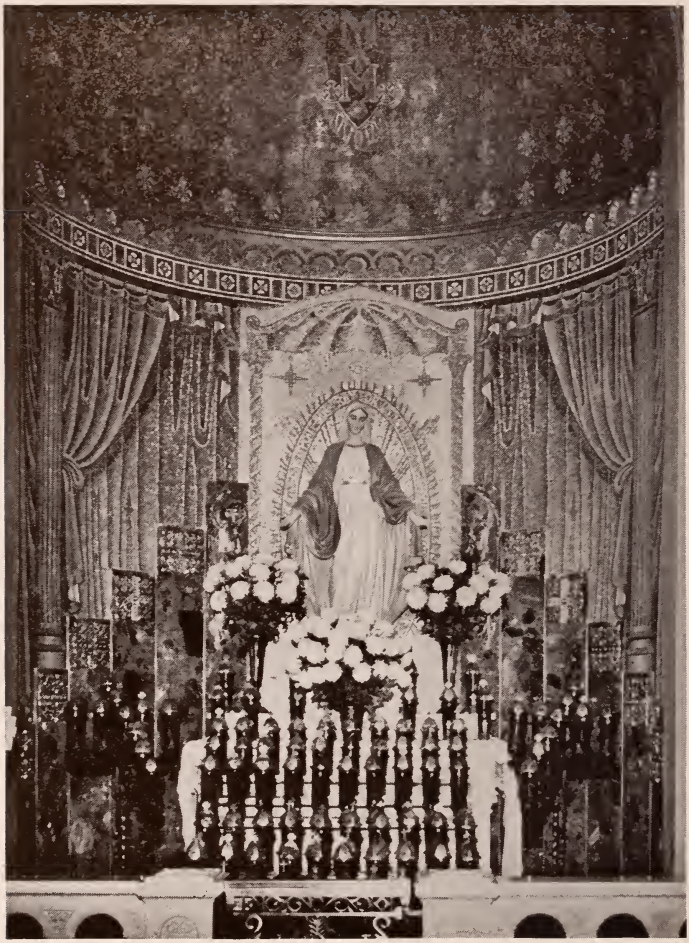
because that was the parish of so many of the lads of the 69th, and of so many of them who "went west" on the fields of France. Father Duffy knew the souls of men, the foibles and weaknesses of men, and the Glory of God which a word could kindle in their hearts. When he was made pastor of Holy Cross he was among his own, the men who survived, their mothers and their wives and their children, and the widows and the children of those men who never came home.

He was a close friend of Sergeant Joyce Kilmer, of the 69th, a convert to the Catholic Faith, who died one August day with a German bullet through his forehead, and whose poems, the best known of which is "Trees," have become famous.

Father Duffy came to Holy Cross and a changed world. Men who had been taught to shoot and kill were thrust back on a civilization that wanted civilization so pitiably. Their women wanted it. Their children wanted it. They wanted it themselves—these lads who had seen so much of killing and maiming and bloodshed, and had heard the screams of men dying from hideous, torturing wounds.

To Father Duffy they turned. They turned so much that, the man with the baldish head, the keen, clear eyes, the wide strong mouth, who could hear them swear under stress, and tolerate their weaknesses, because "Those lads are all right, I hear their confessions," became the legend of Broadway, which is the legend of the world.

His statue stands now at the crossroads of that world. It is a plain, simple statue of a plain, simple man. Backed by a Celtic Cross, it is the epitome of his Irish ancestry and the Ancient Faith. Nightly, daily, it is viewed by the Broadway throngs, as it faces South to unobstructed Times



SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF THE MIRACULOUS MEDAL

Square. Actors, actresses, authors, taxi drivers, shop girls, factory workers, peddlers, policemen, pass by it every night, and every day. But the statue of Father Duffy is only a piece of stone. It is no more than the brick walls of the Church of the Holy Cross. Yet both are more than just that. One is the tribute of men and women to a man whom they respected, admired, loved; the other a temple to the God they worship, and Whom that man served so faithfully.

Father Duffy was summoned to his Maker, June 26, 1932, and on September 24th, the Rev. Joseph A. McCaffrey was appointed to succeed him as Rector, by Patrick Cardinal Hayes.

In making the appointment, the Cardinal realized the exigencies and the difficulties of finding the right man to fill Father Duffy's place. The task with which the appointee would be faced would be no easy task. There are few Father Duffys. But Father McCaffrey was the man.

He is young, keen, eager. His eyes flash just the way he talks, and when he talks there is meaning to his words. In his clericals it is not always easy to remember that he, like Father Duffy, was a Chaplain of the Regular Army, and saw much service overseas. He doesn't speak about that. Records, however, have a way of speaking in cold, indisputable terms. And those who were there, men at Soissons, the Marne, the Argonne, on the Meuse, and the Aisne and at St. Mihiel, they have a way of speaking, too. Ask the records, and ask these men about Father McCaffrey.

This, at the very least, you'll find: He was cited for bravery under fire in France, and was awarded the Croix de Guerre by the French, and the Silver Star by the American Government. But you'll find more than that. You'll learn the unwritten history of a man whose simplicity of faith, like

Father Duffy's, is his greatness, and that, that simplicity and greatness, to say nothing of his charity and understanding, is why Holy Cross today is the great Shrine that it is.

He is Chaplain of the 69th Regiment and was recently promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Up to the present time only one other priest of the Archdiocese of New York has ever held this high commission in the United States Army—Father Duffy.

In addition to being Chaplain of the 69th, Father McCaffrey is Chaplain of the New York Police Department, to which post he was appointed in 1923. He is also Spiritual Advisor to their Holy Name Societies, and to the Holy Name Society of employees of the Interborough Rapid Transit.

Of the 18,000 men comprising the New York Police Department, 12,000 are Catholics; of the 1,200 peace-time strength of the 69th, 1,000 are of the Catholic Faith. The Holy Name Society of both groups annually attend a special Communion Mass and Breakfast. The police Holy Name Society annual service is held every Passion Sunday in St. Patrick's Cathedral; the 69th's, in Father McCaffrey's own church, when the whole Regiment, Catholics and non-Catholics, attend.

In both instances the men march to the service in uniform. The sight of them, erect, chins up, stalwart and strong, is inspiring. One noted onlooker of the crowds which line the sidewalks to see them pass was heard to say, "There go your real Americans, the bulwarks not only of New York, but of the entire country."

Holy Cross Church is flanked on both sides by stores, business houses and hotels. It is faced by the great towering McGraw-Hill Building. Within almost the sweep of a man's arm are theaters, cheap movies, taxi-dance halls,

shooting galleries, honky-tonks, a flea circus. In the midst of all this and the hullabaloo of barkers and touts, amid the flashing of advertising signs, Holy Cross Church is a welcome haven. It is the Mecca for many. On Sundays and Mondays particularly, it is the goal of thousands, mostly transients, who swarm through its doors.

That Catholics should crowd a church for Mass on Sunday is not unusual; but Catholics crowding a church all day, *every* Monday, in the pleasure, business and hotel center in any city, is a rarity indeed. The explanation is the Perpetual Novena to Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal.

Father McCaffrey inaugurated this Novena five years ago. Under his guidance, and with the able assistance of the Rev. Joseph J. O'Rourke, Director of the Novena, every Monday approximately 20,000 of the faithful attend it, some coming great distances, fifty, sixty, even from seventy-five miles away. It has been participated in by more than two million five hundred thousand persons to date, has reached countless others over the radio, and the number of weekly worshipers is on the increase—an item of unusual interest in view of the fact that the 42nd Street area has long ceased to be a residential district. In addition, it has been a source of inspiration to three hundred churches in the metropolitan district to inaugurate similar Novenas.

Growing in attendance also is Holy Cross's special "Printers' Mass" which is held every Sunday morning at 2:30 o'clock. Its purpose was to facilitate Mass attendance by night-workers, especially the linotype operators, the compositors, reporters and desk-men of *The New York Times, Herald Tribune, Daily News* and *Daily Mirror.* But the congregation now includes many a homeward bound merry-maker, who, anxious to sleep late, might otherwise miss Mass.

Among the upwards of a thousand who occupy the pews at this Mass, it is not uncommon to find visitors from almost every state in the Union and from many countries abroad.

Constantly since his advent as Pastor in 1932 has Father McCaffrey been adding to the prestige of Holy Cross Parish. Through his efforts was established the "Father Joseph A. McCaffrey Playground," an oasis of sunlight for the mothers and children in this neighborhood of towering office buildings, palatial hotels, luxurious theaters and squalid tenements.

He has made the Holy Cross Parochial School a model of grade school education and training with its recently modernized building, its free medical service, its free Dental Clinic, its distinctively uniformed children and its up-to-date military discipline.

It has been under Father McCaffrey's guidance that Holy Cross has taken its place as one of the most influential churches in the spiritual life of the people of the Metropolitan District in and around New York. And its fame has become nation-wide. Day after day hundreds of visitors of New York make their way to Holy Cross Church to admire its beauty and to spend some time before the prayer-inspiring Shrines of the Sacred Heart and Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal,—the beauty of which is not surpassed anywhere in America. Truly Father McCaffrey has made Holy Cross Church a magnet of Spiritual Devotion in New York!

But it is not the Novena, and the Shrines, and the "Printers' Mass," and the lovely interior of Holy Cross that make it what it is. It is the spirit of its pastors and their assistants, from Father Lutz to the present Pastor, Father Joseph A. McCaffrey—men who can walk with God and not lose the common touch.

SUNDAY MASSES

Early Morning Mass—2:20 A. M.
Sunday Morning Masses—6:00; 7:00; 8:00; 9:00; 10:00; 11:15 A. M. and 12:15 P. M.

HOLYDAY MASSES

Masses—2:20 A. M.; 6:00; 7:00; 8:15; 9:00; 10:00 and 11:00 A. M.
Noonday Masses—12:05 and 12:35 P. M.

WEEK DAY MASSES

7:00; 8:00 and 9:00 A. M.

NOVENA SERVICES

Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal
(Every Monday)
11:10 A. M.; 12:10; 1:15; 4:10; 5:15; 6:10; 7:10; 8:10 and 9:10 P. M.

Radio Broadcast
Station WHN from 1:15 to 1:45 P. M.

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